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INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000762

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STATE FOR EUR/NCE BILL SILKWORTH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/16

TAGS: PGOV PREL PINR RO

SUBJECT: FORMER RULING SOCIAL DEMOCRATS TO SIGN AGREEMENT
WITH EXTREMIST GREATER ROMANIA PARTY

Classified By: Ambassador Nicholas Taubman, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) announced May 8 it would sign a protocol of parliamentary cooperation with the extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM). PSD President Mircea Geoana claimed publicly that the agreement would entail preparation of a joint no-confidence motion directed against the center-right government. Geoana categorically insisted, including to the Ambassador, that the accord was not a preamble to a political alliance between PSD and PRM. One PSD contact told post that many in the party believe that Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu will not remain in office for the long term, due to his lack of support from President Traian Basescu. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) PSD's May 8 public announcement of an entente between the PSD and PRM to move forward a no confidence motion against the center right government followed several days of uncertainty triggered by PRM President Corneliu Vadim Tudor's May 5 declaration that the two parties would sign a "protocol of cooperation in parliament...as a first step towards the crystallization of an united opposition.⁸ Leading PSD politicians immediately expressed surprise at Tudor's May 5 announcement regarding "imminent formalization" of the relationship between their party and PRM. They criticized Geoana for negotiating a deal with Tudor without first consulting with party leaders. PSD Senator and sociologist Vasile Dancu warned May 5 that &the protocol might bring more costs than benefits.⁸ PSD spokesperson and respected former Justice Minister Cristian Diaconescu acknowledged publicly he was not aware of any pending agreement between the two parties. PSD youth leader, Deputy Victor Ponta, unequivocally stated that he opposed an accord with the PRM. On May 7, representatives of the Party of European Socialists (PES), of which PSD is a member, expressed concern about the pending protocol in light of the PES policy against members' forming ties with extremist and xenophobic parties.

¶3. (SBU) After several days of hesitation, Geoana confirmed May 8 that the two parties would move forward with the no confidence motion. He also confirmed that PSD insider Viorel Hrebenciuc would lead the PSD's negotiating efforts.

¶4. (C) A key Geoana counselor told EmbOffs May 9 that Geoana was, in effect, sucker punched by Tudor's May 5 announcement of a pending agreement. He acknowledged that the two leaders had been privately discussing a possible entente for some time, but he opined that Tudor had captured the initiative (and the headlines) by his wholly unexpected May 5 announcement, putting Geoana in a "delicate" position with PSD leaders. According to the counselor, Geoana scrambled post May 5 to shore up his prestige within the party and salvage the deal with Tudor. That said, the counselor privately echoed Geoana's public insistence that the

agreement between the two parties was an ad hoc joint effort to pass a no confidence motion against the center-right coalition government. In response to a question from Emboff, however, the counselor admitted that PSD and PRM had "excellent" long-standing cooperation at the local level. The counselor, who also has a long history of working with Hrebenciuc, asserted that Hrebenciuc "hated" the PRM and (unlike Geoana) would not be trapped by Tudor.

¶ 15. (C) On May 8, the Ambassador spoke with Geoana to underscore concern about what appeared to be a PSD alliance with a party with well-documented anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, and anti-ethnic Hungarian views. He expressed concern that this would compromise the PSD in the eyes of many in other parts of Europe and the U.S. Geoana claimed the Ambassador that the PSD's agreement with PRM would be "purely strategic" and focused on a discrete set of measures in the Parliament. He asserted that the PSD would "cross no red lines" beyond the terms of a "technical arrangement." The Ambassador underscored that the PSD would be watched closely in this regard.

¶ 16. (C) Comment. While the PSD has cooperated with the PRM in the past to varying degrees, the announced agreement took many political analysts by surprise. A number of commentators have predicted the pact could further damage the already diminished PSD public image, tarnished by a series of corruption scandals in recent months. Nonetheless, one Embassy PSD contact assessed that there could be a deeper strategy, noting that many in the PSD leadership did not have faith in the long-term political survival in office of PM Tariceanu due to his lack of support from Basescu. While the same contact did not speculate as to when Tariceanu could face a challenge, he did assess that joint PSD and PRM

BUCHAREST 00000762 002 OF 002

efforts could eventually play a role in such an effort. End Comment.

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